8

A SERMON

PREACH'D at the

FUNERAL

Of the Right Honourable

JOHN Earl of *Rocheſter*,

WHO

Died at WOODSTOCK-PARK, *July* 26, 1680.

AND WAS

Buried at SPILSBURY in *Oxfordſhire*, *Auguſt* 9.

By ~~*THOMAS*~~ *PARSONS*, M. A.
Chaplain to the Right Honourable ANNE
Counteſs-Dowager of *Rocheſter*.

Robert
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I ſay unto you, that likewiſe joy ſhall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt perſons that need no Repentance. LUKE XV. 7.

The THIRTEENTH EDITION.

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St. Luke xv. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.

If ever there were a Subject that might deserve and exhaust all the Treasures of Religious Eloquence in the Description of so great a Man, and so great a Sinner as now lies before us; together with the Wonders of the divine Goodness, in making him as great a Penitent; I think the present Occasion affords one as remarkable as any Place or Age can produce.

Indeed, so great and full a Matter it is, that 'tis too big to come out of my Mouth, and perhaps not all of it fit or needful so to do. The Greatness of his Parts are well enough known, and of his Sins too well in the World; and neither my Capacity, nor Experience, nor my Profession, will allow me to be so proper a Judge, either of the One or the Other. Only as God has been pleased to make me a long while a sad Spectator, and a secret Mourner for his Sins; so has he at last graciously heard the Prayers of his nearest Relations, and true Friends, for his Conversion and Repentance: And 'tis the good Tidings of that especially, which God has done for his Soul, that I am now to *publish and tell abroad to the World*, not only by the Obligations of mine Office, in which I had the Honour to be a weak

Miniſter to it, but by his own expreſs and dying Commands.

Now altho', to deſcribe this worthily, would require a Wit equal to that with which he lived, and a Devotion too, equal to that with which he died, and to match either will be a very hard Task; yet beſides that, I am not ſufficient for theſe things, (for who is?) and that my Thoughts have been rather privately buſied to ſecure a real Repentance to himſelf, whilſt living, than to publiſh it abroad to others in an artificial Dreſs after he is dead: I ſay, beſides all this, I think I ſhall have leſs need to call in the Aids of ſecular Eloquence. The proper Habit of Repentance is not fine Linnen, or any delicate Array, ſuch as are uſed in the Court, or King's Houſes, but Sack-cloth and Aſhes: And the Way which God Almighty takes to convey it, *is not by the Words of Man's Wiſdom*, but by the Plainneſs of his written Word, aſſiſted by the inward Power and *Demonſtration of the Spirit:* And the Effects it works, and by which it diſcovers it ſelf, are not any Raptures of Wit and Fancy, but the moſt humble Proteſtations both of Soul and Spirit, and the captivating all humane Imaginations to the Obedience of a deſpiſed Religion, and a crucified Saviour.

AND 'tis in this Array I intend to bring out this Penitent to you; an Array which I am ſure he more valued, and deſired to appear in, both to God and the World, than in all the Triumphs of Wit and Gallantry, and therefore (waving all theſe Rhetorical Flouriſhes, as beneath the Solemnity of the Occaſion, and the Majeſty of that great and weighty Truth I am now to deliver) I ſhall content my ſelf with the Office of a plain Hiſtorian, to relate faithfully and impartially what I ſaw and heard; eſpecially during his penitential Sorrows; which, if all that hear me this

Day, had been Spectators of, there would then have been no need of a Sermon to convince Men, but every Man would have been as much a Preacher to himſelf of this Truth, as I am, except theſe Sorrows: And yet even theſe Sorrows ſhould be turn'd into Joys too, if we would only do what we pray for, that *the Will of God may be done in Earth as it is in Heaven:* for ſo our Bleſſed Lord aſſures us; *I ſay unto you, that likewiſe Joy ſhall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth,* &c. From which I ſhall conſider,

I. *The Sinner particularly that is before us.*
II. *The Repentance of this Sinner, together with the Means, the Time, and all probable Sincerity of it.*
III. *The Joy that is in Heaven, and ſhould be on Earth, for the Repentance of this Sinner.*
IV. *I ſhall apply my ſelf to all that hear me; that they would join in this Joy, in Praiſe and Thankſgivings to God for the Converſion of this Sinner; and if there by any that have been like him in their Sins, that they would alſo ſpeedily imitate him in their Repentance.*

And 1. Let us conſider the Perſon *before us*, as he certainly was a great Sinner. But becauſe Man was upright before he was a Sinner, and to meaſure the Greatneſs of his Fall, it will be neceſſary to take a View of that Height from which he fell; give me leave to go back a little to look into the Rock from which he was hewn, the Quality, Family, Education, and perſonal Accompliſhments of this great Man. In doing of which, I think no Man will charge me with any Deſign of cuſtomary Flattery, or Formality; ſince I intend only thereby to ſhew the Greatneſs and Unhappineſs of his Folly, in the perverting

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ſo many excellent Abilities and Advantages for Virtue and Piety in the Service of Sin, and ſo becoming a more univerſal, inſinuating and prevailing Example of it.

As for his Family, on both Sides, from which he was deſcended, they were ſome of the moſt famous in their Generations. His Grandfather was that excellent and truly great Man, *Charles* Lord *Wilmot*, Viſcount *Athlone* in *Ireland*. *Henry* his Father, who inherited the ſame Title and Greatneſs, was by his late Majeſty King *Charles* I. created Baron of *Adderbury* in *Oxfordſhire*, and by his preſent Majeſty Earl of *Rocheſter*. He was a Man of ſignal Loyalty and Integrity indeed; and of ſuch Courage and Conduct in Military Affairs as became a great General. His Mother was the Relict of Sir *Francis Henry Lee* of *Ditchly* in the County of *Oxford*, Baronet, Grandmother to the preſent Right Honourable Earl of *Litchfield*, and the Daughter of that generous and honourable Gentleman, Sir *John St. Johns* of *Lyddiard* in the County of *Wilts*, Baronet, whoſe Family was ſo remarkable for Loyalty, that ſeveral of his Sons willingly offer'd themſelves in the Day of Battle, and died for it; and whilſt the Memory of the *Engliſh* or *Iriſh* Rebellion laſts, that Family cannot want a due Veneration in the Minds of any Perſon, that loves either God or the King.

As for his Education, it was in *Wadham* College in *Oxford*, under the Care of that wiſe and Excellent Governour Dr. *Blandford*, the late Biſhop of *Worceſter*; there it was that he laid a good foundation of Learning and Study, tho' he afterwards built upon that foundation Hay and Stubble. There he firſt ſuck'd from the Breaſts of his Mother the Univerſity, thoſe Perfections of Wit and Eloquence, and Poetry, which afterwards,

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by his own corrupt Stomach, were turn'd into Poiſon to himſelf and others; which certainly can be no more a Blemiſh to thoſe Illuſtrious Seminaries of Piety and good Learning, than a diſobedient Child is to a wiſe and virtuous Father, or the Fall of Man to the Excellency of Paradice.

A WIT he had ſo rare and fruitful in its Invention, and withal ſo choice and delicate in its Judgment, that there is nothing wanting in his Compoſures to give a full Anſwer to that Queſtion, what and where Wit is? Except the Purity and Choice of Subject. For had ſuch excellent Seeds but fallen upon good Ground, and inſtead of pitching upon a Beaſt, or a Luſt, been raiſed up on high, to celebrate the Myſteries of the Divine Love, in Pſalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs; I perſwade my ſelf we might by this time have receiv'd from his Pen, as excellent an Idea of Divine Poetry, under the Goſpel, uſeful to the Teaching of Virtue, eſpecially in this Generation, as his profane Verſes have been to deſtroy it. And I am confident, had God ſpared him a longer life, this would have been the whole Buſineſs of it, as I know it was the Vow and Purpoſe of his Sickneſs.

HIS natural Talent was excellent, but he had hugely improv'd it by Learning and Induſtry, being throughly acquainted with all Claſſick Authors, both Greek and Latin; a thing very rare, if not peculiar to him among thoſe of his Quality, which yet he uſed not, as other Poets have done, to tranſlate or ſteal from them, but rather to better, and improve them by his own natural Fancy. And whoever reads his Compoſures, will find all things in them ſo peculiarly Great, New, and Excellent, that he will eaſily pronounce, That tho' he has lent to many others, yet he has borrowed

rowed of none; and that he has been as far from a ſordid imitation of thoſe before him, as he will be from being reach'd by thoſe that follow him.

His other perſonal Accompliſhments in all the Perfections of a Gentleman for the Court or Country, whereof he was known by all Men to be a very great Maſter, is no part of my Buſineſs to deſcribe or underſtand; and whatever they were in themſelves, I am ſure they were but miſerable Comforters to him, ſince they only miniſtred to his Sins, and made his Example the more fatal and dangerous; for ſo we may own, (nay I am obliged by him not to hide, but to ſhew the Rocks, which others may avoid) that he was once one of the *greateſt Sinners*.

And truly none but one ſo great in Parts could be ſo. His Sins were like his Parts, from which they ſprang, all of them high and extraordinary. He ſeem'd to affect ſomething ſingular and paradoxical in his Impieties, as well as in his Writings, above the Reach and Thought of other Men; taking as much Pains to draw others in, and to pervert right Ways of Virtue, as the Apoſtles and primitive Saints did, *to ſave their own Souls, and them that heard them.* For this was the heightning and amazing Circumſtance of his Sins, that he was ſo diligent and induſtrious to recommend and propagate them; not like thoſe of old that *hated the Light*, but thoſe the Prophet mentions, Iſaiah iii. 9. *Who declare their ſins as Sodom, and hide it not*; that *take it upon their ſhoulders, and bind it to them as a crown*; framing Arguments for Sin, making Proſelytes to it, and writing Panegyricks upon Vice.

Nay, ſo confirm'd was he in Sin, that he oftentimes almoſt died a Martyr for it. God was pleaſed ſometimes to puniſh him with the Effects of his Fol-

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ly, yet till now (he confeſſed) *they had no Power to melt him into true Repentance*; or if at any time he had ſome lucid Intervals from his Folly and Madneſs, yet (alas) how ſhort and tranſitory were they? All that *goodneſs was but as a morning cloud, and as the early dew which vaniſhes away*; he ſtill return'd to the ſame Exceſs of Riot, and that with ſo much the more greedineſs, the longer he had faſted from it.

AND yet even this deſperate Sinner, that one would think had made *a covenant with death, and was at an agreement with hell*, and juſt upon the Brink of them both; God, to magnify the Riches of his Grace and Mercy, was pleaſed to ſnatch as a Brand out of the Fire. As St. *Paul*, tho' *before a blaſphemer, a perſecutor, and injurious*, yet *obtain'd mercy, that in him Chriſt Jeſus might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them that ſhould hereafter believe on him to everlaſting life.* 1 Tim. i. 13, 16. So God ſtruck him to the Ground as it were by a Light from Heaven, and a Voice of Thunder round about him. Inſomuch that now the Scales fall from his Eyes, as they did from St. *Paul*'s; his ſtony Heart was open'd, and ſtreams of Tears guſh'd out, the bitter but wholeſome Tears of true Repentance.

AND that this may appear to be ſo, I think it neceſſary to account for theſe two Things,

I. For the Means of it; that it was not barely the Effect of Sickneſs, or the Fear of Death; but the Hand of God alſo working in them and by them manifeſtly.

II. For the Sincerity of it; which tho' none but God that ſees the Heart, can tell certainly, yet Man even alſo may and ought to believe it; not only in the Judgment of Charity, but of moral Juſtice, from all evident Signs of it, which

were poſſible to be given by one in his Condition.

And 1ſt. *For the Means or Method of his Repentance.* That which prepared the Way for it was a ſharp and painful Sickneſs, with which God was pleaſed to viſit him; the Way which the Almighty often takes to reduce the wand'ring Sinner to the Knowledge of God and of himſelf. *I will be unto* Ephraim *as a lion, and as a young lion unto the houſe of* Judah; *I, even I, will tear and go away, and none ſhall relieve him; I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and ſeek my face*; and *in their affliction they will ſeek me early*, Hoſ. v. 14, 15.

And tho' to forſake our Sins then, when we can no longer enjoy them, ſeems to be rather the effect of Impotency and Neceſſity, than of Choice, and ſo not ſo acceptable or praiſe-worthy; yet we find God Almighty often uſes the one to bring about the other; and improves a forced abſtinence from Sin, into a ſettled loathing and a true deteſtation of it.

It is true, there are ſuch ſtubborn Natures, that like Clay, are rather hardned by the Fire of Afflictions; ungracious Children, that fly in the Face of their heavenly Father in the very inſtant when he is correcting them, or it may be like thoſe Children who promiſe Wonders then, but preſently after forget all. Such as theſe we have deſcribed, Pſal. lxxviij. 34, 35, 36, 37. *When he ſlew them, then they ſought him, and they return'd and enquir'd early after God; then they remember'd that God was their rock, and that the high God was their redeemer; nevertheleſs they did but flatter him with their mouth, and lyed unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither continued they ſtedfaſt in his covenant.* And

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'tis probable this has been the Caſe formerly of this Perſon. But there was an evident difference betwixt the Effects of this Sickneſs upon him, and many others before: *He had other Sentiments of Things now,* (he told me) *and acted upon quite different Principles*; he was not vex'd with it as it was painful, or hinder'd him from his Sins, which he would have *roll'd under his Tongue* all the while, and long'd again to be at; but he *ſubmitted patiently to it, accepted it as the Hand of God, and was thankful, bleſſing and praiſing God not only in, but for his Extremities.* There was now no *Curſings*, no *Railings* or *Reproaches* to his Servants, or thoſe about him, which in other Sickneſſes were their uſual Entertainment, but he treated them with all the Meekneſs and Patience in the World, begging Pardon frequently of the Meaneſt of 'em but for a haſty Word, which the Extremity of his Sickneſs, and the Sharpneſs of his Pain might eaſily force from him. His Prayers were not ſo much for Eaſe or Health, or a continuance in Life; as for Grace, and Faith, and perfect Reſignation to the Will of God. So that I think, we may not only charitably but juſtly conclude, that his Sickneſs was not the chief Ingredient, but thro' the Grace of God, an effectual Means of a *true*, tho' late Repentance, as will beſt be judged by the Marks I am now to give you of the Sincerity of it; for which I am in the next Place to account.

II. AND 'twas the Power of the Divine Grace, and of that only, that brake thro' all thoſe Obſtacles that uſually attend a Man in his Circumſtances; that God (who is a God of infinite Compaſſion and Forbearance) allow'd him Leiſure and Opportunity for Repentance; that he awaken'd him from his ſpiritual Slumber by a pungent Sickneſs; that he gave him ſuch a Pre-

ſence of Mind, as both to provide prudently for his wordly Affairs, and yet not to be diſtracted or diverted by them from the Thoughts of a better World; that lengthened out his Day of Grace, and accompanied the ordinary Means of Salvation, and the weak Miniſtry of his Word, with the convincing and over-ruling Power of his Spirit to his Conſcience; which Word of God became to him *quick and powerful, ſharper than any two-edged ſword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of his ſoul and ſpirit*; and at laſt the *ſpirit of God witneſſed to his ſpirit*, that now he was become *one of the children of God.*

Now if the Thief upon the Croſs (an Inſtance too much abuſed) was therefore accepted, becauſe accompanied with all the Effects of a ſincere Convert, which his Condition was capable of; as Confeſſion of Chriſt in the midſt of the Blaſphemies of Phariſees, and his own lewd Companion, and deſertion even of Chriſt's Diſciples; if his Repentance be therefore judg'd real, becauſe he ſeems to be more concern'd in the remembrance of Chriſt's future Kingdom than his own Death; if St. *Paul* was approv'd by the ſame more-abundant Labours which he commended in the *Corinthians*, yea, *What Zeal? What Fear? What vehement Deſire?* 2 Cor. vij. 11. I think I ſhall make it appear, that the Repentance of this Perſon was accompanied with the like hopeful Symptoms: And I am ſo ſenſible of that awful Preſence both of God and Man, before whom I ſpeak, who are eaſily able to diſcover my Failings, That I ſhall not deliver any thing, but what I know to be a ſtrict and religious Truth.

UPON my firſt Viſit to him, (*May* 26, juſt at his Return from his Journey out of the *Weſt*) he moſt gladly receiv'd me, ſhew'd me extraordinary Reſpects, upon the Score of mine Office,

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thank'd God, who had in Mercy and good Providence ſent me to him, who ſo much needed my Prayers and Counſels; and acknowledging how unworthily heretofore he had treated that Order of Men, reproaching them, that they were Proud, and Prophesied only for Rewards; but now he had learnt how to value them; that he eſteem'd them the Servants of the moſt High God, who were to ſhew to him the Way to Everlaſting Life.

AT the ſame time I found him labouring under ſtrange Trouble and Conflicts of Mind; his Spirit wounded, and his Conſcience full of Terrors. Upon his Journey he told me, *He had been arguing with greater Vigour againſt God and Religion than ever he had done in his Lifetime before, and that he was reſolv'd to run them down with all the Arguments and Spite in the World, but,* like the great Convert St. *Paul, he found it hard to kick againſt the Pricks.* For God at that time had ſo ſtruck his Heart by his immediate Hand, that preſently he argued as ſtrongly for God and Virtue, as before he had done againſt it. That God ſtrangely opened his Heart, creating in his Mind moſt awful and tremendous Thoughts and Ideas of the Divine Majeſty, with a delightful Contemplation of the Divine Nature and Attributes, and of the Lovelineſs of Religion and Virtue. *I never* (ſaid he) *was advanced thus far towards Happineſs in my Life before, tho' upon the Commiſſions of ſome Sins extraordinary, I have had ſome Checks and Warnings conſiderable from within, but ſtill ſtruggled with them, and ſo wore them off again. The moſt obſervable that I remember was this: One Day at an Atheiſtical Meeting, at a Perſon of Quality's, I undertook to manage the Cauſe, and was the principal Diſputant againſt God and Piety, and for my Performances receiv'd the Applauſe of the whole Company; upon which my Mind was terribly ſtruck, and*

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I immediately reply'd thus to my ſelf. Good God! that a Man that walks upright, that ſees the wonderful Works of God, and has the Uſes of his Senſes and Reaſon, ſhould uſe them to the defying of his Creator! But tho' this was a good Beginning towards my Converſion, to find my Conſcience touch'd for my Sins, yet it went off again; nay, all my Life long, I had a ſecret Value and Reverence for an honeſt Man, and lov'd Morality in others. But I had form'd an odd Scheme of Religion to my ſelf, which would ſolve all that God or Conſcience might force upon me; yet I was not ever well reconciled to the Buſineſs of Chriſtianity, nor had that Reverence for the Goſpel of Chriſt as I ought to have. Which eſtate of Mind continued till the 53d Chapter of *Iſaiah* was read to him, (wherein there is a lively Deſcription of the Sufferings of our Saviour, and the Benefits thereof) and ſome other Portions of Scripture; by the Power and Efficacy of which Word, aſſiſted by his holy Spirit, God ſo wrought upon his Heart, that he declar'd, that *the Myſteries of the Paſſion appear'd as clear and plain to him, as ever any thing did that was repreſented in a Glaſs*; ſo that that Joy and Admiration, which poſſeſs'd his Soul upon the Reading of God's Word to him, was remarkable to all about him; and he had ſo much delight in his Teſtimonies, that in my Abſence he begg'd his Mother and Lady to read the ſame to him frequently, and was unſatisfied (notwithſtanding his great Pains and Weakneſs) till he had learn'd the 53d Chapter of *Iſaiah* without Book.

AT the ſame time, diſcourſing of his Manner of Life from his Youth up, and which all Men knew was too much devoted to the *Service of Sin*, and that the *Luſt of the Fleſh, of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*, had captivated him: He was very large and particular in his Acknowledg-

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ments about it, more ready to accuſe himſelf than I, or any one elſe can be; publickly crying out, *O bleſſed God, can ſuch an horrid Creature as I am be accepted by thee, who has deny'd thy Being, and contemn'd thy Power?* Asking often, *Can there be Mercy and Pardon for me? Will God own ſuch a Wretch as I?* And in the Middle of his Sickneſs ſaid, *Shall the unſpeakable Joys of Heaven be confer'd on me? O mighty Saviour! never, but thro' thine infinite Love and Satisfaction! O never, but by the Purchaſe of thy Blood!* adding, *That with all abhorrency he did reflect upon his former Life; that ſincerely and from his Heart he did repent of all that Folly and Madneſs which he had committed.*

Indeed he had a true and lively Senſe of God's great Mercy to him in ſtriking his hard Heart, and laying his Conſcience open, which hitherto was deaf to all God's Calls and Methods: ſaying, *if that God, who died for great as well as leſſer Sinners, did not ſpeedily apply his infinite Merits to his poor Soul, his Wound was ſuch as no Man could conceive or bear,* crying out, *that he was the vileſt Wretch and Dog that the Sun ſhined upon, or the Earth bore; that he now ſaw his Error in not living up to that Reaſon which God endued him with, and which he unworthily vilify'd and contemn'd;* wiſh'd *he had been a ſtarving Leper crawling in a Ditch,* that he *had been a Link-boy or a Beggar, or for his whole Life confin'd to a Dungeon, rather than thus to have ſinned againſt his God.*

How remarkable was his Faith, in a hearty Embracing and devout Confeſſion of all the Articles of our chriſtian Religion, and all the divine Myſteries of the Goſpel? ſaying, that *that abſurd and fooliſh Philoſophy, which the World ſo much admired, propagated by the late Mr.* Hobbs, *and others, had undone him, and many more, of the beſt Parts in the Nation?* who, without God's great Mercy

to

to them, may never, I believe, attain to ſuch a Repentance.

I MUST not omit to mention his faithful adherence to, and caſting himſelf entirely upon the Mercies of Jeſus Chriſt, and the free Grace of God, declared to repenting Sinners through him; with a thankful remembrance of his Life, Death, and Reſurrection; begging *God to ſtrengthen his Faith*, and often crying out, *Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*

HIS mighty Love and Eſteem of the Holy Scriptures, his Reſolutions to read them frequently, and meditate upon them, if God ſhould ſpare him, having already taſted the good Word; for having ſpoken to his Heart, he acknowledged, *all the ſeeming Abſurdities and Contradictions thereof, fancied by Men of corrupt and reprobate Judgments, were vaniſhed, and the Excellency and Beauty appeared, being come to receive the Truth in the Love of it.*

HIS extraordinary fervent Devotions in his frequent Prayers of his own, moſt excellent and correct; amongſt the reſt, for the King, in ſuch a Manner as became a dutiful Subject, and a truly grateful Servant; for the Church and Nation, for ſome particular Relations, and then for all Men; his calling frequently upon me at all Hours to pray with him, or read the Scriptures to him; and toward the end of his Sickneſs, would heartily deſire *God to pardon his Infirmities, if he ſhould not be ſo wakeful and intent thro' the whole Duty as he wiſh'd to be*, and that *tho' the Fleſh was weak, yet the Spirit was willing, and hop'd God would accept that.*

HIS continual Invocation of God's Grace and Holy Spirit to ſuſtain him, to keep him from all evil Thoughts, from all Temptations and Diabolical Suggeſtions, and every thing which might

be

be prejudicial to that religious Temper of Mind, which God had now ſo happily endued him withal, crying out, one Night eſpecially, *how terrible the Tempter did aſſault him, by caſting upon him lewd and wicked Imaginations, but I thank God* (ſaid he) *I abhor them all, by the Power of his Grace, which I am ſure is ſufficient for me, I have overcome them, 'tis the Malice of the Devil, becauſe I am reſcu'd from him; and the Goodneſs of God, that frees me from all my ſpiritual Enemies.*

His great Joy at his Lady's converſion from *Popery* to the Church of *England*, (being, as he term'd it, *A Faction ſupported only by Fraud and Cruelty*) which was by her done with deliberation and mature Judgment; the dark Miſts of which have for ſome Months before been breaking away, but now cleared, by her receiving the bleſſed Sacrament with her dying Husband, at the Receiving of which no Man could expreſs more Joy and Devotion than he did; and having handled the Word of Life, and ſeen the Salvation of God, in the Preparation of his Mind, he was now ready *to depart in Peace.*

His hearty Concern for the pious Education of his Children, wiſhing that his *Son might never be a Wit*, that is, (as he himſelf explain'd it) *one of thoſe wretched Creatures who pride themſelves in abuſing God and Religion, denying his Being, or his Providence, but that he might become an honeſt and religious Man, which could only be the ſupport and bleſſing of his Family*, complaining *what a vitious and naughty World they were brought into*, and that *no Fortunes or Honours were comparable to the Love and Favour of God to them*, in whoſe Name he bleſſed them, pray'd for 'em, and committed them to his Protection.

His ſtrict Charge to thoſe Perſons, in whoſe Cuſtody his Papers were, *to burn all his profane*

and lewd Writings, as being only fit to promote Vice and Immorality, by which he had ſo highly offended God, and ſhamed and blaſphem'd that Holy Religion into which he had been baptized; and all his obſcene and filthy Pictures, which were ſo notoriouſly Scandalous.

His readineſs to make Reſtitution to the utmoſt of his Power to all Perſons whom he had injur'd; and for thoſe whom he could not make a Compenſation to, he pray'd for God's and their Pardons. His remarkable Juſtice in taking all poſſible Care for the Payment of his Debts, which, before, he confeſſed he had not ſo fairly and effectually done.

His readineſs to forgive all Injuries done againſt him, ſome more particularly mention'd, which were great and provoking; nay, annexing thereto all the Aſſurance of a future Friendſhip, and hoping he ſhould be as freely forgiven at the Hand of God.

How tender and concern'd was he for his Servants about him in his Extremities, (manifeſted by the Beneficence of his Will to them) pitying their Troubles in Watching with him, and attending him, treating them with Candour and Kindneſs, as if they had been his Intimates!

How hearty were his Endeavours to be Serviceable to thoſe about him, exhorting them to *the Fear and Love of God, and to make a good Uſe of his forbearance and long-ſuffering to Sinners, which ſhould lead them to Repentance.* And here I muſt not paſs by his pious and moſt paſſionate Exclamation to a Gentleman of ſome Character, who came to viſit him upon his Death-bed; *O, Remember that you contemn God no more, He is an avenging God, and will viſit you for your Sins; he will in Mercy, I hope, touch your Conſcience ſooner or later, as he hath done mine: You and I have been*

Friends

Friends and Sinners together a great while, therefore I am the more free with you: We have been all miſtaken in our Conceits and Opinions, our Perſuaſions have been Falſe and Groundleſs, therefore God grant you Repentance. And ſeeing him the next Day again, he ſaid to him, *Perhaps you were diſoblig'd by my Plainneſs to you Yeſterday; I ſpake the Words of Truth and Soberneſs to you,* and (ſtriking his Hand upon his Breaſt) ſaid, *I hope God will touch your Heart.*

LIKEWISE his Commands to me, *to preach Abroad, and to let all Men know* (if they knew it not already) *how ſeverely God had diſciplin'd him for his Sins by his afflicting Hand; that his Sufferings were moſt Juſt, tho' he had laid Ten thouſand Times more upon him; how he had laid one Stripe upon another becauſe of his grievous Provocations, till he had brought him home to himſelf; that in his former Viſitations he had not that bleſſed Effect he was now ſenſible of.* He had *formerly* ſome *looſe Thoughts and ſlight Reſolutions of Reforming, and deſign'd to be better, becauſe even the preſent Conſequences of Sin were ſtill peſtering him, and were ſo troubleſome and inconvenient to him; but that now* he had *other Sentiments of Things, and acted upon other Principles.*

HIS willingneſs to die, if it pleaſed God, *reſigning himſelf always to the Divine Diſpoſal; but if God ſhould ſpare him yet a longer Time here, he hop'd to bring Glory to the Name of God in the whole Courſe of his Life, and particularly by his endeavours to convince others, and to aſſure them of the Danger of their Condition, if they continued impenitent, and how graciouſly God had dealt with him.*

HIS great Senſe of his Obligations to thoſe excellent Men, the Right Reverend my Lord Biſhop of *Oxford*, and Dr. *Marſhal*, for their cha-

ritable and frequent Viſits to him, and Prayers with him; and Dr. *Burnet*, who came on purpoſe from *London* to ſee him, who were all very ſerviceable to his Repentance.

His extraordinary Duty and Reverence to his Mother, with all the grateful Reſpects to her imaginable, and Kindneſs to his good Lady, beyond Expreſſion, (which may well enhance ſuch a Loſs to them) and to his Children, obliging them with all the Endearments that a good Husband or a tender Father could beſtow.

To conclude theſe Remarks, I ſhall only read to you his dying Remonſtrance, ſufficiently atteſted and ſign'd by his own Hand, as his trueſt Senſe, (which I hope may be Uſeful for that good End he deſign'd it) in Manner and Form following.

"FOR the Benefit of all thoſe whom I may "have drawn into Sin by my Example "and Encouragement, I leave to the World this "my laſt Declaration, which I deliver in the "Preſence of the great God, who knows the "Secrets of all Hearts, and before whom I am "now appearing to be Judged.

"That from the Bottom of my Soul I deteſt "and abhor the whole Courſe of my former "wicked Life: That I think I can never ſuffi-"ciently admire the Goodneſs of God, who has "given me a true Senſe of my pernicious Opi-"nions and vile Practices, by which I have hi-"therto lived without Hope, and without God

"in

" in the World, have been an open Enemy " to JESUS CHRIST, doing the utmoſt Deſ- " pite to the Holy Spirit of Grace. And that " the greateſt Teſtimony of my Charity to ſuch " is, to warn 'em in the Name of God, and as " they regard the Welfare of their Immortal " Souls, no more to deny his Being, or his " Providence, or deſpiſe his Goodneſs; no more " to make a Mock of Sin, or contemn the pure " and excellent Religion of my ever Bleſſed Re- " deemer, thro' whoſe Merits alone, I, one of " the greateſt Sinners, do yet hope for Mercy " and Forgiveneſs. *Amen.*

Declared and Sign'd in the Preſence of

ANNE ROCHESTER.

ROB. PARSONS.

June 19, 1680.

J. ROCHESTER.

AND

And now I cannot but mention with Joy and Admiration that ſteddy Temper of Mind, which he enjoy'd through the whole Courſe of his Sickneſs and Repentance; which muſt proceed, not from a Hurry and Perturbation of Mind or Body, ariſing from the Fear of Death, or Dread of Hell only, but from an ingenuous Love to God, and an uniform Regard to Virtue, (ſuitable to that ſolemn Declaration of his, *I would not commit the leaſt Sin to gain a Kingdom*) with all poſſible Symptoms of a laſting Perſeverance in it, if God ſhould have reſtored him. To which may be added his comfortable Perſuaſions of God's accepting him to his Mercy, ſaying, three or four Days before his Death, *I ſhall die: But oh, what unſpeakable Glories do I ſee! what Joys, beyond Thought or Expreſſion, am I ſenſible of! I am aſſured of God's Mercy to me through Jeſus Chriſt. Oh how I long to die, and be with my Saviour!*

The Time of his Sickneſs and Repentance was juſt nine Weeks; in all which Time he was ſo much Maſter of his Reaſon, and had ſo clear an Underſtanding, (ſaving thirty Hours, about the Middle of it, in which he was delirious,) that he had never Dictated or Spoke more compoſed in his Life: and therefore if any ſhall continue to ſay, his Piety was the Effect of Madneſs or Vapours; let me tell them, 'tis highly diſingenuous, and that the Aſſertion is as Silly as it is Wicked. And moreover, that the Force of what I have delivered may not be evaded by wicked Men, who are reſolved to harden their Hearts, maugre all Convictions, by ſaying, *This was done in a Corner*; I appeal, for the Truth thereof, to all Sorts of Perſons, who, in conſiderable Numbers, viſited and attended him, and more particularly to thoſe eminent Phyſicians who were near

near him, and converſant with him in the whole Courſe of his tedious Sickneſs; and who, if any, are competent Judges of a Phrenſy or *Delirium*.

THERE are many more excellent Things in my abſence, which have occaſionally dropt from his Mouth, that will not come within the narrow Compaſs of a Sermon; theſe, I hope, will ſufficiently prove what I produce them for. And if any ſhall be ſtill unſatisfied here in this hard-hearted Generation, it matters not, let them at their Coſt, be Unbelievers ſtill, ſo long as this excellent Penitent enjoys the Comfort of his Repentance. And now from all theſe admirable Signs, we have great Reaſon to believe comfortably, that his Repentance was real, and his End happy; and accordingly imitate the Neighbours and Couſins of *Elizabeth*, (*Luke* i. 58.) who, *when they heard how the Lord had ſhewed great Mercy upon her, came and rejoyced with her.*

THUS his dear Mother ſhould rejoyce, that the Son of her Love, and of her Fears, as well as of her Bowels, is now born again into a better World; adopted by his Heavenly Father, and gone before her to take Poſſeſſion of an eternal Inheritance.

II. HIS truly loving Conſort ſhould rejoyce, that God has been ſo gracious to them both, as at the ſame Time to give him a Sight of his Errors in Point of Practice, and herſelf (not altogether without his Means and Endeavours) a Sight of hers in Point of Faith. And truly, conſidering the great Prejudices and Dangers of the *Roman* Religion, I think I may aver, that there is Joy in Heaven, and ſhould be on Earth, for her Converſion, as well as his.

III. HIS

III. His noble and moſt hopeful Iſſue ſhould rejoyce, as their Years are capable; not that a dear and loving Father has left them, but that ſince he muſt leave them, he has left them the Example of a Penitent, and not of a Sinner; the Bleſſing of a Saint, in recommending them to an All-ſufficient Father, and not entailing on them the fatal Curſe that attends the Poſterity of the Wicked and Impenitent.

IV. All good Men ſhould rejoyce, to ſee the Triumphs of the Croſs in theſe latter Days, and the Words of Divine Wiſdom and Power. And bad Men certainly, whenever they conſider it, are moſt of all concern'd to Joy and Rejoyce in it, as a condemn'd Malefactor is, to hear that a Fellow-criminal has got his Pardon, and that he may do ſo too, if he ſpeedily Sue for it.

And this Joy of all will ſtill be the greater, if we compare it with the Joy there is in Heaven, in the caſe of juſt Perſons, that need no Repentance, *viz.* that need not ſuch a ſolemn extraordinary Repentance, or the whole Change of Heart and Mind, as great Sinners do; and of this my Text pronounces, that there is *greater joy in heaven over one* ſuch *ſinner that* truly *repenteth, than there is over ninety and nine juſt perſons that need not* ſuch *a repentance.* One Reaſon of which we may conceive to be this; that ſuch a Penitent's former Failings, are ordinarily the Occaſion of a greater and a more active Piety afterwards; as our Convert earneſtly wiſh'd, *that God would be pleaſed to ſpare him but one Year more, that in that he might Honour his Name proportionably to the Diſhonour done to God in his whole Life paſt.* And we ſee St. *Paul laboured more abundantly* than all the Apoſtles in the Planting of the Church, becauſe he had raged furiouſly before in the Deſtruction of it; and our

our Saviour himſelf tells us, that *to whom much is forgiven they will love much, but to whom little is forgiven they will love little.*

'TIS certainly the more ſafe, indeed the only ſafe Way to be conſtantly virtuous, and he that is wiſe indeed, i. e. *wiſe unto ſalvation*, will endeavour to be one of thoſe that *need no repentance*; I mean that entire and whole Work of beginning anew, but will draw out the ſame Thread thro' his whole Life, and let not the Sun go down upon any of his Sins: but then the other Repentance is more remarkable, and, where it is real, the more effectual, to produce a fervent and a fruitful Piety; beſides, the greater Glory to God in the Influence of the Example. Which may probably be a farther Reaſon of the exceſſive Joy of the Angels at the Converſion of ſuch a Sinner; becauſe they, who are better acquainted with humane Nature than we, knowing it apt, like the *Phariſees*, to demand a Sign from Heaven, for the Reformation of corrupted Cuſtoms, diſcern likewiſe, that ſuch deſperate Spiritual Recoveries, will ſeem ſo many Openings of the Heavens in the Deſcent of the holy Dove, viſibly to the Standers-by; and accordingly will have the greater Influence upon them. And 'tis this in the laſt Place, that I am to recommend to all that hear me this Day.

AND having thus diſcharg'd the Office of an Hiſtorian, in a faithful Repreſentation of the Repentance and Converſion of this great Sinner; give me Leave now to beſpeak you as an Ambaſſador of Chriſt, and in his Name, earneſtly *perſwade you to be reconcil'd to him*, and to follow this illuſtrious Perſon, not in his Sins any more, but in his Sorrows for them, and his forſaking them. If there be any in this Place, or elſewhere, who have been drawn into a Complacency or Practice

of any Kind of Sin from his Example, let thoſe, eſpecially be perſwaded *to break off their Sins by Repentance*, by the ſame Example; that as he has been *for the Fall*, ſo he may now *for the riſing again of many in* Iſrael. God knows there are too many that are wiſe enough to diſcern and follow the Examples of Evil, but to do Good from thoſe Examples they have no Power; like thoſe abſurd Flatterers we read of, who cou'd imitate *Plato* in his Crookedneſs, *Ariſtotle* in his Stammering, and *Alexander* the Great in the Bending of his Neck, and the Shrilneſs of his Voice, but either could not, or would not, imitate them in any of their Perfections. Such as theſe I would beſeech, in their cooler Seaſons to ask themſelves that Queſtion, *What fruit had you in thoſe things whereof you are now aſhamed, for the end of theſe things is death?* And if any encourage themſelves in their Wickedneſs from this Example, reſolving however to enjoy the good Things that are preſent; *to fill themſelves with coſtly wines, and to let no part of pleaſure paſs by them* untaſted, ſuppoſing with the Goſpel rich Man, that when *one comes to them from the dead*, when Sickneſs or old Age approaches, that then *they will repent*; let ſuch as theſe conſider the dreadful Hazard they run by ſuch pernicious Counſels. It may be (and it is but juſt with God it ſhould be) that whilſt they are making *proviſions for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof*, and are ſaying to their Souls, *ſoul thou haſt much goods laid up for many years*, therefore *take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry*; perhaps juſt then at the ſame Time the Hand of God may be writing upon the Walls of their Habitations, that fatal Sentence, *thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee, and then whoſe ſhall all thoſe things be, which thou haſt promis'd?* And what ſad Reflections muſt ſuch a One need make

upon

upon his own Folly, when he ſees all that Mirth and Eaſe, which he has promiſed himſelf for ſo many Years, muſt be at an End in a very few Hours? and not only ſo, but that Mirth turn'd into Howlings, and that Eaſe into a Bed of Flames; when the Soul muſt be torn away on a ſudden from the Things it loved, and go where it will hate to live, and yet cannot die. And were it not better for us to embrace cordially the *things which belong to our* everlaſting *peace*, before *they are hid from our eyes?* Were it not better for us all to be wiſe betimes, by preventing ſuch a Danger, than to open our Eyes, as the unhappy rich Man did, when we are in the Place of Torment?

BE perſuaded then with humble, penitent, and obedient Hearts to meet the Bleſſed *Jeſus*, who is now on the Way, and comes to us in the Perſon and in the Bowels of a Saviour, wooing us to accept thoſe eaſy Conditions of Pardon and Peace offer'd in his holy Goſpel, rather than to ſtay till he become our Adverſary and our Judge too, when he will *deliver us over to the tormentors, till we have paid the utmoſt farthing*, i. e. to all Eternity: when thoſe who have made a Mock at Sin all their Lives and laugh'd at the pretended Cheats of Religion and its Prieſts, ſhall find themſelves at laſt the greateſt Fools, and the moſt ſadly cheated in the World; for God will then *laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh, when it cometh as deſolation, and their deſtruction as a whirlwind.* And ſince they would not ſuffer his Mercy to rejoyce over his Juſtice, nor cauſe any Joy in Heaven, as the Text mentions, in their Converſion; his Juſtice will certainly rejoyce over his Mercy, and cauſe Joy in Heaven (as it did at the Fall of *Babylon*) which *would not be cured*, Rev. xix. 1. in their Confuſion. And O that there was ſuch an Heart in them, that they would conſider this

betimes! that in the midſt of their carnal Jollities they would but vouchſafe to Regard what may happen hereafter, and what will certainly be the End of theſe Things. For however the Fruits of Sin may ſeem *pleaſant to the eye, and to be deſired, to make one ſeem wiſe* and witty to the World, yet alas, they are but empty and unſatisfactory at preſent, and leave a mortal Sting behind 'em, and *bitterneſs in the latter end*; like the Book St. *John* eat, (*Rev.* x. 10.) *which in his mouth was ſweet as honey, but as ſoon as he had eat it, his belly was bitter*. And that God ſhould pleaſe at laſt to bring Men back in their old Age from their ſinful Courſes, by a *way of weeping*, to pluck them as *fire-brands* out of *everlaſting burnings*; yet if Men conſider how rare and difficult a Thing it is to be *born again when one is old*, how many Pangs and Violences to Nature there muſt needs be, to put off the Habits and Inclinations to old Sins, as difficult (ſaith the Prophet) *as for the leopard to change his ſpots, or the æthiopian his ſkin*: And then when that's done, what Scars and Weakneſſes even a Cure muſt leave behind. I ſay, he that duly conſiders this, will think it better to ſecure his Salvation, and all his preſent true Comforts, by preſerving his Innocency, or alleviating his Work by a daily Repentance for leſſer Failings, than to venture upon one ſingle Chance of a Death-bed Repentance; which is no more to be depended upon, for the Performance, or Acceptance, than it can encourage any Man not to labour, becauſe *Elias* was fed by *Ravens*, or the *Iſraelites* with *Manna* from Heaven.

If then there be any (tho' alas that need not be asked) that have made the Greatneſs of their Wit, or Birth, or Fortune, *inſtruments of iniquity to iniquity*; let them now convert them to that original noble Uſe for which God intended them,

them, *viz.* to be *inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto holineſs.*

To theſe eſpecially that are this great, not only God, but this great Perſon alſo, by my Mouth, *being dead, yet ſpeaketh*; for as St. *Paul* ſeem'd more eſpecially concern'd for his Brethren and Kinſmen according to the Fleſh, and even the rich Man in Hell, tho' ſufficiently diſtracted by his own Sufferings, yet ſeems hugely deſirous that one might be ſent from the Dead to his Brethren, that he might *teſtify unto them, leaſt they alſo come into that place of torment*: ſo this Illuſtrious Convert, after God had open'd his Eyes to ſee his Follies, was more eſpecially deſirous of the Salvation of thoſe that were his Brethren, tho' not in the Fleſh, yet in the Greatneſs of their Quality, and of their Sins; paſſionately wiſhing, *that all ſuch, were not only almoſt, but altogether ſuch as he now was*, ſaving his bodily Afflictions; and of great Force methinks, ſhould the Admonitions of a dying Friend be.

Now theſe eſpecially I would beſeech, as the Miniſter of Chriſt, and ſuch as, *tho' we are reviled we Bleſs, tho' we are defamed we Intreat*, to *ſuffer the Word of Exhortation*, that they would not terminate their Eyes upon the outward Pomp and Pageantry that attends them, as the vulgar *Jews* did upon their Rites and Ceremonies; but (as the wiſer *Iſraelites*, who eſteem'd thoſe glittering Formalities as the Types and Images of heavenly Things) be quickned by them to the Ambition of original Honours, and future Glory. How much were it to be wiſh'd, that ſuch Perſons eſpecially would be Followers of God and Goodneſs, ſince whether they will or no, other Men will be Followers of them.

It is true the Temptations of great Perſons are more, and greater than thoſe of Inferiors; but then their Abilities and Underſtandings are ordinarily greater too; and if they lie more open to the Aſſaults of the Devil, they have generally greater Sagacity to foreſee the Danger, and more powerful Aſſiſtance to go through it. Nor is Piety inconſiſtent with Greatneſs, any more than it is with Policy, but is the beſt Foundation and Security both to the One and the Other. The Breeding of *Moſes* at Court, without doubt contributed much even to his religious Performances, at leaſt ſo far, as to make them more uſeful and exemplary to others: But then he was ſincerely virtuous all the while, as well whilſt reputed the Son of *Pharoah*'s Daughter, as when *Jethro*'s Son-in-law.

We find Chriſtians in *Cæſar*'s Houſhold as ſoon as any where elſe in *Rome*; and when Chriſtianity had once gain'd *Conſtantine*, it ſpread itſelf farther over the Empire in a few Years, than before it had done in ſome Centuries. Since then ſo much Good or Miſchief depends upon illuſtrious Examples, will it not better become Men to draw the Multitude after them to Heaven, by their Piety; than, by infectious Guilts, to be at the Head of a miſerable Company of the Damn'd.

'Tis this Piety, a timely and exemplary Piety, that will perpetuate to Men of Birth and Fortunes, their Honours, and their Eſtates too, as well by deriving on them the Bleſſing of God, who is the true Fountain of Honour; as by creating an Awe and Reverence for them from all Orders of Men, even to many Generations; a Reverence which will be freſh and laſting, when all the Trophies of Wit and Gaiety are laid in the Duſt. 'Tis this Piety that will be the Guide of their Youth, and the Comfort of their Age; *for*

length

length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. 'Tis this, and this only, that can make all outward Bleſſings comfortable, and indeed Bleſſings to us, by making them the Steps and Means of attaining the never-fading Honours and incomprehenſible Glories of that Kingdom which is above; where there ſhall be no more Sin, nor Sickneſs, nor Pain, nor Tears, nor Death, but we ſhall reſt from all our Labours, and our Works ſhall follow us.

Unto which, God, of his infinite Mercy, bring us, for the Merits and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt *our Saviour; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, let us aſcribe all Praiſe and Adoration, now and for ever.* Amen.

FINIS.

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